

April in the Tallahassee Garden

Katherine LaRosa is a Master Gardener Volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County.

April 1, 2004

Photo by Paul Adams, lihummer.com: Now is a good time to plant perennials such as Salvia guaranitica. Like many salvias, this one is favored by hummingbirds.

Shrubs and Trees: If you didn't fertilize azaleas back in March, you may fertilize them once they finish blooming. You may use a fertilizer especially formulated for acid loving plants. Or you may use a general 15-0-15 landscape fertilizer as long as it doesn't contain a high amount of nitrogen in the nitrate form. The label will indicate the percentage of nitrate nitrogen. Be careful not to fertilize too heavily. Distribute the fertilizer evenly over the root zone. Azaleas have shallow roots which can easily be burned by excess fertilizer. Take time to evaluate your azalea and other shrub beds. How are your



existing shrubs and trees blooming? Over time the amount of sun and shade in your beds may have changed. Too much shade can diminish the blooms. Too much sun can cause problems for shade lovers such as azaleas. If you've removed trees or neighboring shrubs your beds may suffer. If you are planning on adding new azalea beds the best place for them is under high pine shade. Some new varieties bloom at a different time from the cultivars which predominate in our area and some even repeat bloom. Check for these at your garden center. Replacing old mulch with new will help to discourage the spread of fungus and disease.

Annuals and Perennials : Plant perennials for summer color including daylilies, lantana, verbena, salvias, sedum, purple coneflower, rudbeckia, and summer phlox. Ornamental grasses, alpinia ginger, aspidistra and ferns make a nice backdrop for shorter flowering plants. Use the ornamental grasses in the sun and the others in shaded beds. Warm-season annual flowers may be seeded. These can be sown directly in the ground. Keep seed beds moist until seeds germinate. Thin out as soon as they are large enough to transplant so the remaining plants will not be crowded. When buying nursery grown annuals, select short, compact plants, preferably ones that have not yet begun to flower. Remove flowers and buds to encourage the plants to become well established before flowering. Divide and transplant fall blooming perennials including asters, bee balm, shasta daisies, yarrow, coreopsis, and chrysanthemums.

Bulbs, Rhizomes, Corms and Tubers: Fertilize amaryllis and other summer blooming bulbs as the foliage appears. Plant summer blooming bulbs now. In shade or part shade plant achimenes, walking iris, gingers, agapanthus, and crinums. Plant gladiolus, dahlias, irises, lilies, cannas, and society garlic in sunny locations.

April in the

Roses: Fertilization can begin now and continue every four to six weeks until September. Climbing roses may be pruned as soon as they finish blooming.

Lawn care: April is the month to begin fertilizing lawns. Generally a 15-0-15 fertilizer is a good choice for most lawns. Don't use a weed-and-feed fertilizer combination with atrazine unless you usually have a lot of summer weeds.

Vegetables and Herbs: There's still time in early April to plant lots of vegetables and herbs including bush and pole beans, cucumber, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, summer & winter squash, and watermelons from seed. Also plant transplants of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. All these should be seeded or transplanted right away for best results. Okra and southern peas, lima beans, sweet potatoes and watermelons do better with warmer soil and therefore can be planted later in the month. Thin seedlings and space transplants the recommended distances between plants. Use scissors to snip unwanted seedling to avoid disturbing the roots of the remaining ones. Plant warm season herbs like basil, summer savory and mints.

Houseplants: As you set out your houseplants, even though some of some of them can tolerate full sun, you should move them gradually from deep shade to sun. Also repot those that haven't been repotted in the past two or three years. Most potted plants eventually become root bound. Repot with potting soil that drains well. Also check to see if your plants require a specific type of soil. Orchids, African violets, cacti, and various other plants have specific soil requirements. For more information on houseplants visit the University of Florida IFAS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG031>.

###

Return to [Monthly & Seasonal Articles](#).